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# THE EARLY OTTOMANISATION OF **URBAN** CYPRUS

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# THE EARLY OTTOMANISATION OF URBAN CYPRUS

By Colin Breen

## SUMMARY

In 1571 the Ottomans completed the conquest of Cyprus. In order to consolidate their new territory the Ottomans introduced a policy of imperial control that was centred on local accommodation and negotiation to facilitate stable governance. This study examines the process of the conquest and the extent to which the conquest changed the character of the urban landscapes of Cyprus. Architecture and urban reshaping represented a central facet of this process of colonial change and introduced a new visual language of control and Islamic presence. Nicosia was established as an administrative provincial capital and underwent redevelopment that followed an urbanscape replicating core features of an Ottoman town. This pattern of redevelopment was replicated elsewhere across the island as its economic infrastructure was strengthened. However, this period remains contested within the context of contemporary conflict on the divided island.

Key words: Cyprus, Ottoman, Conflict, colonial, urban architecture

In 1489 Cyprus came under Venetian rule. Over the following decades it emerged as a dynamic hub of Venetian maritime activity across the eastern Mediterranean and facilitator of maritime borne trade with Syria.<sup>1</sup> The period saw a growth in both economic activity and a rise in population levels on the island. Much of this growth was centred on the production and distribution of commodities such as salt, cotton, sugar and grains<sup>2</sup>, with salt perhaps being the most valuable. Agricultural activity was centred on the island's flat central plain, which has been referred to as the granary of the island,<sup>3</sup> with wheat and barley the dominant crops. The Trodos Mountain region was the focus for wine making while fruit and vegetables dominated agricultural production at the base of range. This was largely a rural economy with Arbel suggesting that there were only two towns of notable size immediately prior to the Ottoman invasion, Nicosia and Famagusta (Fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> The island paid an annual tribute to the Ottoman Empire from 1516 to ensure continuing trading activities across the Eastern

Mediterranean region. Jennings has suggested that this payment seems to have been a practice that originated in the Mamluk period following its conquest of Syria and Egypt and continued to be paid into the Ottoman period.<sup>5</sup> However, while this tribute was being paid through the opening decades of the 16th century the Ottomans take an increased propitiatory interest in the island. Cyprus was seen as a strategic location, and also had come to be regarded as a base for vessels harassing Ottoman interests across the region.<sup>6</sup> These decades were marked by a deteriorating relationship with Venice, ultimately resulting in conquest. Ottoman forces landed on the southern shores of the island in 1570, taking Limassol in the first instance. They then marched to Nicosia and took it after a 45 day siege.<sup>7</sup> Famagusta was finally taken in 1571, completing the conquest.<sup>8</sup> This conquest of the island led to significant societal changes across the island over the following 300 years until the end of Ottoman rule in the 1878, following the transfer of administrative control of the island to Britain. Significantly, this historic Turkish presence continues to play a major role in contemporary identity politics on the island and historical perspectives on its impact remain highly contested.

The original aim of this study was to examine the process of the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus and to analyse the extent to which the conquest changed the character of the urban landscapes of Cyprus. It specifically focussed on the way the new rulers protected the island and established a physical framework for their administration of their new territory. This article attempts then to provide a spatial assessment of the early years of the conquest and suggests that the Ottomans were following a formulaic and highly structured approach to their early colonial activities on the island. This manifested itself physically through architectural transformation and building modification that reflected the core security concerns of the new administration and was designed to facilitate the bureaucratic management of their economic regime. These transformations were also associated with the Islamisation of the landscape and was reflective of their social and spiritual values and belief systems. This study frames the early conquest of Cyprus as a colonial venture. After Rhodes's conceptual approach to European power in East Africa,<sup>9</sup> it sees Ottoman colonialism on the island as a process designed to control the people and the island territory, an area that lay outside the Ottoman centre in Istanbul. It suggests that the primary drivers behind this process lay in the strategic value of the island to the Porte, but more specifically in the value of its resources. The Ottoman administrators were functioning at a distance from the empire's heart in Istanbul but they were deeply embedded within its operating systems. In following this structuralised

colonial approach they were not only adhering to the direct orders from the capital but were also, in effect, **reimaging** Istanbul and its ordered morphology at places like Nicosia, which became their principal urban centre on Cyprus. However, as with many aspects of Ottoman governance degrees of accommodation and local mediation were involved in the establishment of the new administration, with the idealised decrees coming from the Porte often being modified to meet local needs and concerns.

Over a four year period from 2014-2017 each of the major settlement sites associated with the Ottoman administration were visited and assessed for surviving built structural evidence. Photogrammetry and traditional archaeological survey methodologies were utilised to record the buildings. A series of urban and rural walkover transect surveys were also undertaken to **identify features and map out any surviving evidence** for the **spatial character of the later 16th-century urban cultural landscape**.

## OTTOMAN CONQUEST AND CONTROL

The Ottoman conquest of Cyprus was viewed at the time as a seismic event in the eastern Mediterranean region that threatened to destabilise and undermine the extensive Venetian empire. The importance of the event was reflected in a series of contemporary cartographic depictions of the invasion and its key events. In a series of important maps, both sieges of Nicosia and Famagusta were recorded. Nicosia was illustrated in Simon Pinargenti's 1573 *isolario* (book of islands) and depicts the bastion fortifications of the town under siege from the surrounding Ottoman forces (Fig. 2). In a clearly symbolic use of labelling the map maker depicts two small armed groups confronting each other in front of the western bastions, labelled as *Turchi* (Turks) and *Cristiani* (Christians), in a clear reference to the perceived religious nature of the conflict.<sup>10</sup> While the town had a number of churches and other important buildings only the centrally placed Cathedral of Santa Sofia is labelled internally, and is again an indicator of the interests and political orientation of the map maker.

Interestingly, we know that the walls were in relatively poor condition at this time, yet Pinargenti illustrated them as strong, almost impregnable entities. The primary historical evidences suggests that their construction only started in 1567 and that by the time of the siege they were still unfinished, with the Venetian defenders relying instead on a number of earthen forts built on high ground near the line of the walls. By 1570 only the earthen core of the walls had been fully constructed and the defenders strengthened its upper levels with earthen sods,<sup>11</sup> in order to absorb the impact of artillery attack. The defences are represented

as multiple complete pointed bastions, yet their eventual morphology was somewhat different and did not conform to the idealised manner in which they were shown. In this, and other maps, they were then illustrated symbolically to represent the strength and architecturally advanced nature of the defending Christian forces.

In the immediate aftermath of the conquest Cypriot society was weakened. Both the sieges of Nicosia and Famagusta had used considerable food supplies from across the island and conflict related mortality was high. As with many immediate post conflict arenas there was a subsequent outbreak of disease and indicators of widespread poverty. **It was in these conditions** that the Ottomans moved quickly to consolidate their new territory in a highly structured and organised manner. After many decades of expansion the Empire's administrators had a clear model of how to expand its mechanisms of control. Prior to Selim I's conquests (1512-20) the Ottomans had largely ruled their territories and Christian subjects through a process of accommodation (*istimalet*), but now adopted a more structured system centred on their Islamic traditions, while retaining the principle of accommodation in practice on the island.<sup>12</sup> This process of Ottomanization was designed to create order across society, facilitate economic expansion and remodel the territory to reflect the architectural and ideological norms of Islamic society and that of the Ottoman central place, Istanbul. This did not involve a radical overhaul and reshaping of society. Instead, conscious of the need to create a stable atmosphere that was conducive to political stability enabling economic expansion, the Ottomans sought to normalise their relationships with the pre-existing population as much as possible while maintaining clear control. Barkey has discussed how the Ottomans generally negotiated power in a post conquest environment through the use of brokerage and mediation, and were especially astute at the creation of networks.<sup>13</sup> Military control remained important, especially in the early years following conquest, but the Ottomans realised their long term presence and associated stability in newly taken territories could only be realised through degrees of integration and accommodation. Throughout the 15th and 16th centuries the Ottomans had demonstrated that they were especially adept at devising particular administrative and revenue collecting systems most suited to their regions of control, **as evidenced through recent studies across the Ottoman frontiers**.<sup>14</sup> In following previous patterns of administrative divisions the island became the *sancak* of Cyprus, with thirteen *kazas*, or taxation districts, and seventeen *nahiyes*, with Nicosia as the administrative centre.<sup>15</sup>

The first stage in their highly structured approach to asserting colonial control was the refortification of strategic locations including castle, harbours and road systems to protect routeways and communication infrastructure. This was followed by a *tahrir* survey or fiscal survey, undertaken from late in 1570, followed by the reorganisation and establishment of civilian settlements (*mahalle*). 800-900 villages were known prior to conquest, including Maronite and Armenian villages.<sup>16</sup> The Ottoman fiscal register (*mufasssal defteri*) compiled in 1572 in the aftermath of the conquest provides information on 1,137 villages and taxable localities, with 67 villages described as empty. It was from these villages that a significant *Reaya*, or non-administrative tax-paying agricultural class including both Muslim and Christian populations emerged over the following centuries. Land distribution to the commanders and janissaries<sup>17</sup> of the conquest took place, but the estates of the former Venetian rulers remained under the direct control of the Sultan. A crucial component of this process was the physical and spiritual conversion of the primary churches to mosques, and the associated establishment of **charitable religious and philanthropic foundations** (*vakif*) that included the foundation of further mosques, *medreses*, schools, and public baths. These *vakif* complexes became the focus for migrants and were a central funding instrument in town development.<sup>18</sup> Ottoman administrative systems on the island theoretically enforced the segregation of ethnic and religious communities,<sup>19</sup> but the morphology of these early 17<sup>th</sup>-century towns and settlements suggest that the reality of segregation was somewhat different. Economic and political realities resulted in the different groups continuing to live within the same places and initial aspirations towards exclusive spaces quickly broke down over the following decades. This process again reflected the reality of colonialism on the ground, when an idealised Porte perspective was nearly always gradually replaced by the lived reality of local circumstances.

## EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

In a series of reports immediately following the conquest, Lala Mustafa Pasha, leader of the Ottoman forces, wrote about the need to reorganise Cyprus as Ottoman territory. **This process of reorganisation, and the associated architectural evidence, is of central importance to this study. It was this process that provided the foundation for the subsequent Ottomanisation of this landscape.** In a contemporary report he reported that immediately following the siege of Nicosia he had ‘renovated the destroyed walls, dug the moat, brought the canons inside and prepared the country against any enemy’.<sup>20</sup> The stone facing of the town walls and strengthening of the bastions and gates was completed at this time (Fig. 3).<sup>21</sup> Much of the

circuit of the Ottoman period refortification survives. In erecting walling of this type they were replicating Venetian practice but also following the fashionable military trends of late 16th-century Europe. One modification seems to be a movement away from the pointed bastions of earlier decades towards a more rounded style at the individual bastion angles. The surviving Christian community was absorbed under the regime with the 1572 census stating that there were 221 *hane*, or Christian households in the city by that date. In an equally symbolic move, and in line with the Ottoman practice of ensuring political stability was established quickly, Nicosia was selected as their administrative and political centre. This is unusual as they would normally have selected a port city. In Cyprus they instead maintained direct continuity with the Venetian elite who had created their power base in the city in the preceding centuries. The necessary basis for Ottoman administrative infrastructure was in place here, its buildings having largely survived intact following the 1571 siege. Had Famagusta fallen more quickly, then it is likely they would have established their main base there, but given the prolonged siege and significant damage done to that port town, it was unlikely fit to assume such a pivotal role. Nicosia did not have a castle but the Ottoman's adapted the town as a citadel and evidently regarded its refurbished walls as providing sufficient defence for the town's elite.

At Famagusta the main medieval castle was repaired and refurbished, with the construction of a new access bridge, while a number of the Venetian town wall bastions were rebuilt including the Canbulat bastion (Fig. 4). Both the Akkkule and Camposanto bastions were completely reconstructed by 1572, effectively refortifying the port area and protecting the primary asset of the town. Subsequent work also focussed on the historic ports of Paphos and Kyrenia, with the Pasha suggesting that the former could be redeveloped given its two natural ports. One of these could be utilised as a commercial port for up to 100 ships while the second could be fortified with towers and batteries accommodating 50 canon.<sup>22</sup> In response Istanbul wrote that both a mosque and a bath should be constructed in both places and that the Paphos castle should be strengthened, due to its strategic coastal location protecting this harbour and the surrounding coastal area. There is a certain degree of ambiguity in terms of this reference as there had been an earlier 13th-century castle built within the area of the Classical period Roman town.<sup>23</sup> However, this 16th-century document refers to a Frankish and later Venetian tower built at the entrance to Paphos harbour. This had been in a ruinous state following its destruction immediately prior to the Ottoman invasion to prevent its usage by their forces. There was some delay in rebuilding the tower due to financial constraints but



its reconstruction was complete by 1592, as evidenced by a date plaque above the main entrance. A small mosque was also added to the structure, a practice that was evident across newly acquired Ottoman territories. While the mosque was built primarily to serve the small garrison, it was also a visible statement **to the town's inhabitants and visitors** of the intrinsic interlinkages that existed between faith and state. The suggestion of the development of a commercial port was never realised and is reflective of relatively limited Ottoman investment along the coastal zone in general. Istanbul does not appear to have been interested in redeveloping Cyprus as a major centre for maritime trade, but was instead content for it to continue to play a role in agricultural productivity while maintaining its defence for strategic purposes.

The situation at Kyrenia was similar. The extent of its classical-period harbour was limited and the seawalls were in ruins by the time of the conquest. While the Ottomans were involved in the refortification of the citadel, they appear to have regarded the port as of being of limited interest and do not appear to have invested in the town to any great extent. As with many aspects of their approach towards defence their investment in the citadel was limited and did not involve any major refurbishment (Fig. 5). The uppermost fortifications on the southern and western ranges were rebuilt to facilitate small arms, while sections of the bridge approach to the entrance were also strengthened. The protection of these two landward facing sections of the castle is interesting, and indicative of the direction of threat perceived by the Ottomans. One small mosque was constructed centrally in the old town in the early 1570s. However, there is no evidence for the construction of a significant khan of any great size while the town walls, already in a ruinous state were allowed to deteriorate further. Investment in walls was not considered necessary given the large and commodious nature of the citadel. Such a large castle required little refurbishment and Ottoman activity seems to have been limited to the addition of upper walling supporting musket placements along its southern landward wall. Kyrenia, unlike the more commercially strategic ports of the south and west coast was instead regarded as a minor port, facilitating direct military movement from the Turkish mainland, rather than being embedded within the more popular commercialised trade routes on the seas south of Cyprus. In line with the Ottoman practice of facilitating an administrative model that was best suited to their new territories a degree of continuity was maintained between the new rulers and older elite with a number of the old Venetian elite take up new positions of power. For example, the holder of the position as the

head of the port authority in Kyrenia was effectively reinstated after its successor adopted the Muslim faith.<sup>24</sup>

These continuities were further demonstrated by the appropriation of the Venetian palace in Nicosia as the *Serai* or Ottoman Governor's house.<sup>25</sup> The Venetian palace in the Cathedral quarter at Famagusta was similarly appropriated and became the primary administrative Ottoman building in that city. Its architectural appearance was largely unchanged, with the Ottomans showing little interest in developing new forms of architectural expression of secular control and authority. Elsewhere along the coast further alterations to the small castle at Limassol had been completed by 1598, while a small fort and artillery placement was constructed at a pre-existing fortification at Larnaca by the end of the first decade of the 17th century (Fig. 6). Cartographic evidence further suggests that the Ottomans constructed, or at least redeveloped, a series of watch towers along the coast to monitor marine traffic and coastal security. Joseph Roux's 1764 series of maps of the coast of Cyprus show towers positioned at various headlands and landfalls along the southern and western shores of the island. It had been common practice across the Mamluk and Venetian regions to maintain such towers and the Ottomans continued this practice. A string of towers built roughly equidistant from each other at rural coastal locations away from the main coastal settlements were used.

Ottoman policy with regards to churches involved the conversion of the Latin Church buildings into mosques while the Orthodox churches were largely left intact for the Greek Cypriots.<sup>26</sup> The reasons for doing so were complex. The medieval cathedrals were amongst the most dominant architectural structures associated with the Christian Venetian regime. Their conversion reflected not only their physical transference to the Islamic faith, but also the transition of island society to a predominantly Islamic one, at least officially. The Ottomans were then engaged in a very deliberate campaign to remove the Catholic Church from the island in the early years of the conquest. Catholicism, and its churches, were viewed as being intrinsically connected to the former Venetian rulers and as such had to be removed. Ultimately, this took place only in the primary administrative and settlement centres of the Ottomans and elsewhere on the island Catholic orders were to later return. In September 1570 the Islamic institution of *vakif* was established with the conversion of the 13th-century cathedral of Santa Sophia to what is commonly known as the Selimye Mosque.<sup>27</sup> This was established to run and support the area's religious establishments and to serve as the primary charitable body in the town for the provision of housing and education. It also supported

business through various lending mechanisms and supporting agricultural development. Under this process all Christian religious symbols were removed from the former cathedral as well as its main altar. The interior walls were whitewashed and many of the floor tombs removed to allow for the placement of prayer mats and later an expansive carpet. Two large minarets were ordered by the Sultan to be built in 1572, with a further minaret to be added to the Cathedral in Famagusta.<sup>28</sup> Three mihrabs, or prayer niches, had been added by 1595 in the Nicosia mosque. The addition of these minarets was not only a statement of religious change and transition, but were also highly visible architectural statements of political and social change. The architectural height of the towers, coupled with the daily call to prayer, represented both **visual and aural expressions** of the new dominant colonial presence in these urban landscapes. **This is especially evident in the central mosque precincts in both Nicosia and Famagusta. The appropriation and conversion of these former Venetian spaces to new Ottoman administrative precincts, bordered by the two dominant mosques and the converted governor residences, now demarcated the new Ottoman 'centre'. An Ottoman official standing in the centre of these areas could immediately identify each of the most important administrative and political functional places by simply turning a full 360°.**

**Ottomanisation was further demonstrated in the visual sculpted appearance of the churches.**

Externally, the sculpted decoration over the eastern doorway to the Nicosia cathedral was later replaced with a marble slab and koranic verse. Other churches underwent a similar transition (Fig. 7). The Sinan Pasa Mosque originally called St. Peter and St. Paul Church was converted under vakif, but seems to have reverted to use by Christians after only a few months, reflective of the process of accommodation.<sup>29</sup> Further conversions included the former 14th-century St Catherine's Church converted into the Hayder Pasha Camisi and the 14th-century Augustinian Church of St Mary's converted into the Ömerye Camisi, as well as numerous other examples across the island. At Famagusta the Greek Orthodox churches remained as functioning places of worship, as the Orthodox community were not viewed as a threat given the Churches previous absorption into the empire elsewhere in Europe. While these buildings are architecturally understated structures both they, and their associated communities were accommodated under the regime, in comparison to the architecturally dominant and highly elaborate Latin churches which were **abandoned and worship in them effectively banned**. St George's church, for example, was abandoned and its wall painting defaced. The faces of many of the saints and individuals were erased, following Muslim practice of not illustrating human faces or bodies in religious settings. As at Nicosia,

Famagusta's cathedral was converted into a central mosque and a minaret was also later added to the structure. Both of these mosques became the principle centres of worship and prayer on the island.

Through the first decades of the conquests the Ottomans used religious architecture and foundations to further integrate their Islamic worldview on their landscapes of power and control. At the Ravelin gate, the main entrance into the walled town of Famagusta, a new mosque was erected inside the walls. A panel above arched doorway has a Koranic inscription dated to 1618/ 19 while an associated fountain was also constructed close by but is now destroyed. This constructed vista was further enhanced by the establishment of a Muslim cemetery in the direct approaches to the gate with the placement of an Ottoman graveyard and shrines. This Islamisation of landscape through the strategic placement of mosques and cemeteries in the approaches to cities is a practice paralleled across the Ottoman world, **through the burial of ordinary citizens in strategically positioned cemeteries outside of the city walls.**<sup>30</sup> It marks the blending of social, political and spiritual spheres to create a designed and unitary politicised view of these urban landscapes.

## ECONOMIC EXPANSION

Once the island was militarily secure the Ottoman administration could now focus on revitalising and expanding the island's economic base following the upheavals of the conquest. This was achieved in a number of different ways including the development of a commercial infrastructure that supported **continued** sugar production, the creation of an expanded road network, improved port facilities and the sponsoring of a series of commercial caravanserai or khans. At Famagusta an area adjacent to the port was cleared of its pre-existing buildings to establish a mercantile area consisting of warehouses and port buildings. The former Seagate was redeveloped and a number of other subsidiary gates created through the medieval wall to facilitate easier access to the waterfront and the city's commercial quays. Significant labour was required for many of these enterprises with cotton production and the sugar cane plantations being of particular importance at Morphou, Lefka, Paphos, Lapithos, Piskopi and Kolos. In order to partially meet this labour shortage Selim II, issued an imperial decree (*firman*) in September 1572, ordering the transportation of Anatolian Turks to Cyprus.<sup>31</sup> Over 20,000 soldiers would have originally travelled during the conquest and many subsequently settled on the island. Officers were granted lands in return for their service and performance. It is unclear as to the extent of non-military settlement but a degree

of immigration certainly took place. This process of plantation was designed not only to continue economic development on the island but was also structured to pacify the pre-existing populations and encourage loyalty.

Central to Ottoman plans for economic expansion was the provision and distribution of a water supply. As such water became a core tool of their colonial process. There had been a complex system of water management, including aqueducts, across the island since Roman times. The eighteenth-century Italian traveller Mariti wrote that '*remains exist of ancient aqueducts, proving that even in those days it was necessary to bring the water from distant places ...*'.<sup>32</sup> This system now underwent an extensive refurbishment and rebuilding programme (Fig. 8). In 1572 25,800 piaster was set aside in the annual budget for the construction of new aqueducts or refurbishment of existing systems.<sup>33</sup> While the provision of water for agricultural and consumption purposes was of primary importance it had also had other purposes. One core element of this was the development of infrastructure to bring water to the central mosques and associated fountains and wells. These were used for prayer preparation as well as for shared domestic consumption and other communal purposes. The Haydar Pasha fountain in Nicosia was built in 1574, after Haydar Agha had converted the associated church into a mosque, while the Djafer Pasha fountain in Famagusta has a foundation stone dated to 1597, which probably replaced an earlier structure (Fig. 9).

In the context of economic expansion the network of *khans* was especially significant. These caravanserai or inns were a central feature of Ottoman urban development, built to facilitate and stimulate commercial trade and economic development. They were places that could accommodate merchants and their goods, but also provided storage and sales areas and were the foci for revenue generating activities. Their design, consisting of an enclosed courtyard space accommodating a series of small accommodation units built over one or two storeys. While they were designed to ensure security, their form also allowed revenue and administrative official centralised access and easy monitoring of commercial transactions. The Büyük Han, or Great Inn in Nicosia was completed close to the central mosque during the 1570s (Fig. 10). Its location in the centre of the town and adjacent to the central mosque was no coincidence. What the Ottomans created here, or at least recreated, was a central space within the town focussed on the administrative and mercantile elite. Power was intrinsically linked to economic success and the architectural space of central Nicosia reflected this. By 1594 the Great Inn was generating a substantial annual rent from twelve

rest rooms twelve rooms, 8 shoe-stores, a coffee house and bakery.<sup>34</sup> While the Han was built to generate income for the Ottoman state, its income was also used to support the adjacent mosque as part of the pious foundations of Selim II and illustrates the inter-connectivity of all aspects of Ottoman society. Smaller inns were built in the immediate vicinity as trade expanded, all controlled within the confined walled space of the town. However, the Islamic principles of the vakf were not always fully supported. By 1577 the island's governor had established a caravanserai at the site of pre-existing shops, presumably in pursuit of personal profit.<sup>35</sup> However, this was deemed to be counter to the vakf and Istanbul ordered the destruction of the structure and the rebuilding of the shops. It was a reminder that while Cyprus was some distance geographically from the centre of Empire, it remained firmly within the administrative and controlling sphere of the Sultan.

## REIMAGING ISTANBUL

While each of these ventures was not exactly designed to replicate the morphological arrangements of urban design the Ottomans were familiar with in Istanbul, the centre of Porte power and the administrative and religious capital of their empire, they were designed to create a landscape of the familiar. Throughout urban Cyprus the Ottomans recreated buildings in their own familiar image. Many Christian churches were converted to mosques, central elite places for the administration were adopted and new infrastructure was put in place to accommodate their mercantile arrangements. As such these buildings physically articulated their relationship to Istanbul and their negotiation and formation of the relationship between a new power centre and that of the Ottoman centre and its past. One of the first acts the Ottomans undertook when they took Constantinople from the Byzantines was the conversion of the medieval cathedral of Hagia Sophia into the principal imperial mosque in 1453.<sup>36</sup> Construction of the Topkapi Palace had begun by 1460 as the residence of the Sultan and administrative complex that would serve the empire. A centralised mercantile, administrative and elite zone was created around these two major buildings and the walls of the area were rebuilt and consolidated. The city's water system was significantly enhanced and a series of mosques were established across the urban area. The Grand Bazaar was built and other distinct mercantile areas were set up. These elements of change and rebuilding can be paralleled in Nicosia and in the other provincial capitals of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans deliberately set about reimagining Nicosia and transformed it into a capital that would be recognised and negotiated within the context of the new regime and by its wider

administrative, mercantile and social norms. The conversion of the churches was the first stage in this, followed immediately by the appropriation of the existing Venetian palaces as the centres of residence and administration by the island's Ottoman elite. Defending and protecting this administrative centre was of paramount importance and the walls were substantially rebuilt within a year of the conquest. Other key buildings associated with everyday Islamic Ottoman social life were also introduced into the urban fabric of the capital including baths or *hammam* and hans, all fed by a refurbished and enhanced water supply system. This would then have been an urbanscape instantly recognisable by an Ottoman visitor from anywhere across the empire, but more importantly it **reimagined**, and in some ways paid homage, to Istanbul, as the empire's heart. **As in the Porte's capital, a central elite administrative space was created, adjacent to a major mosque with associated mercantile infrastructure in Nicosia. These were the components perceived to be essential for a regional capital, directly mirroring the morphological characteristics of Istanbul.**

In an exemplary study Wattenpaugh has detailed the Ottomanization of the Syrian city of Aleppo in the 16th century.<sup>37</sup> There, through a complex mix of negotiation and accommodation the Ottomans recreated the city and remodelled it to varying degrees to match their ideal of a provincial capital. Minarets and mosques were an intrinsic part of this but it was in the endowment of public and commercial buildings that substantial architectural change took place. This was not, however, a brutal reimagining of the city, but was instead a redesigning that was sympathetic to its past as reflected in the Ottoman negotiation around Mamluk architecture. Maglio has documented a similar process in Rhodes where she has suggested an Islamic model city design was applied to the capital town by the Ottomans during the 16th century.<sup>38</sup> There a central Friday mosque was established, surrounded by public buildings including *hamam*, *madrassa* and *bedesten*, while the town was further divided into a series of *mahalla*, or residential units centred on a mosque. Again, this process was also marked by accommodation and the integration of earlier medieval design and structures. Similar processes can be seen during the Ottomanization of Crete and the reordering of public space there following its conquest in 1669.<sup>39</sup> However, while the Ottomans theoretically implemented their traditional approach to the appropriation and redistribution of land there as evidenced through the primary historical documentation, the reality on the ground seems to have been somewhat different.<sup>40</sup> The island does not appear to have been divided into *timars*, and agricultural landholdings were instead left in the hands of their preexisting owners. While this may have differed from the official decrees coming from the Porte, it reflects the reality

of accommodation in practice and is illustrative of a gradual decline in centralised Ottoman power.

## CONTESTED COLONIAL PRACTICE

Memory associated with the Ottoman conquest is deeply divided on the island of Cyprus. Intercommunal violence broke out in 1964 between the Island's communities who identified as 'Turkish' and 'ethno-Greek'. The United Nations established a buffer zone through Nicosia that divided the island between east and west in order to deescalate the conflict. However, in 1974 the Turkish army invaded the island following the Cypriot coup d'état, led by Cypriot Greek nationalists seeking a unification with Greece and an intensive period of violent conflict and population displacement followed. The island had continued to be physically divided by the UN patrolled Green line and the two groupings remained apart, **until the easing of border restrictions in April 2003** (fig. 11). It is against this context that the Ottoman conquest of the island has remained a highly contested event both historically and politically within contemporary Cyprus.<sup>41</sup> Traditional Greek orientated historiographic narratives record the arrival of the Ottomans in a highly negative light, resulting in the oppression and subjugation of the ethno Greek populations of the island.<sup>42</sup> This builds on an ethno-nationalist perspective that attempts to position contemporary Cypriot society within a **Greek** heritage, interpreted as having been present on the island for millennia.

Unsurprisingly Turkish historians viewed this period somewhat differently and have interpreted the Ottoman conquest as heralding a sustained period of stability and cultural development.<sup>43</sup> This is further structured around a non-**Greek**-centric approach that instead positions Cyprus within a broader regional and geographical framework that rejects cultural linearity. This duality remains problematic and has been increasingly vocalised over the past decades since the 1974 war. Heritage has become a central tool in this continuing othering process associated with ongoing division and low-level conflict. A number of overly simplistic commentaries remain the dominant lens through which the conflict has been viewed with the binary religious divisions between Islam and Christianity remaining a dominant paradigm. A historical geographical and archaeological approach would suggest that the historical realities were far more complex than these dualistic approaches. This was a society constructed along complex ethno-religious identities, with widespread religious conversion and intermarriage common. Processes of acculturation and adaptation resulted in an insular set malleable identities across Cyprus, but especially amongst the communities who lived in the frontier zones of the conquest.



## CONCLUSION

Lowry has argued that Ottoman expansion was linked to ‘predatory confederacy open to all’ rather than as a deliberate attempt to expand Islam.<sup>44</sup> It was associated with a policy of expansion and colonialism driven primarily by economic and strategic interests but with a strong cultural and religious component. Once a country or region had been conquered a number of important societal changes were implemented, linked to a distinctive and uniform model of Ottoman governance. Inalcik has demonstrated that there were a number of key stages in the Ottoman methods of colonial control following conquest and the securing of a territory.<sup>45</sup> They initially attempted to record the resources and population of society in official registers following the removal of the previous dynastic rulers. They then attempted to bring about gradual change, through accommodation and degrees of assimilation. This was apparent in the consolidation and expansion of the economic base of the area and in the remodelling of urban space to support new administrative and social structures.

Both the landscape and architectural evidence from Cyprus would support these interpretative approaches. Following an initial brutal conquest the Ottomans quickly implemented their governance model on the island. Architecture was clearly used as a physical instrument of cultural change.<sup>46</sup> The conversion of the churches, erection of public buildings and adaptation of the old palaces as new centres for the administrative elite were demonstrators of this.

Deliberate architectural production and modification was used **to represent the new political and social norms of the Ottoman regime and its mode of governance.** This constructed visual language was used extensively across both the island’s urban and rural landscapes to overtly demonstrate the shift in power that had taken place. Architecture and design was also a central canon of the Ottoman state alongside administration and legal affairs.<sup>47</sup> Koca Mi'mâr Sinân Âğâ, the empire’s chief imperial architect in the sixteenth century, developed a formulaic approach towards urban design centred on great mosque and administrative complexes positioned in particular topographic positions.<sup>48</sup> Public buildings were designed centrally and their plans forwarded to the provinces, all of which implies control and central oversight, strong features of all aspects of Ottoman administration. However, as with many aspects of Ottoman expansion, local architecture and construction projects involved degrees of accommodation including sensitivities to local designs and materials.<sup>49</sup> **Against this structured approach there were also local responses to change** reflected in architecture and material culture. Pre-existing building styles and forms were integrated into new designs while local adjustments were also facilitated. Nicosia was redeveloped as an Ottoman

provincial city but its morphological components were ordered according to principles set in Istanbul. The visual language used was structured in such a way that the city represented a reimagining of Istanbul on Cyprus. Cathedral conversions to mosques, the creation of open and public central spaces around them and the appropriation of nearby places as the new centres for administrative control and residence replicated the urbanscape of the central city of the Porte. The insertion of numerous koranic plaques above doorways of both private and public buildings further implanted the religious character and new social norms on the city. These changes were designed to create, and replicate, an Ottoman constructed urban vista of power and control, designed to facilitate and promote administrative change and the transfer of power to the new elite.

Ultimately, while this period of Cypriot history is beginning to receive more attention from archaeologists and geographers it remains highly contested in terms of its contemporary understandings and interpretations. This contestation centres on whether the Ottoman period heralded a 300 year period of peace and economic stability or as was an aggressive colonial act. It was **traditionally** presented in the Greek historiographies as the arrival of Turkish oppressors over the Greek islanders.<sup>50</sup> These studies often used the contemporary 16th and 17th-century narratives generated by western Christian annalists who painted a biased and deeply disparaging picture of the situation of the Christian population under Ottoman rule. This **has been** a problematic generalisation, not only from the inherent bias contained within these late medieval commentaries, but is one that re-emerged and became dominant in the nationalist historiographies of nineteenth-century Cyprus. **Aymes has addressed the difficulties associated with the production of this historiography in Cyprus, an island place that has been contested ‘ethnically’, and questions many of the transitional assumptions that have been made about the islands institutions and communities.**<sup>51</sup> Further scholarship has also begun to re-evaluate Ottoman presence on the island in a more favourable light. **Hadjikyriacou has argued convincingly that once the researcher views Cyprus from a new lens beyond the conventional ‘centre/ province dichotomy’ one can see an insular entity that was more successful and reflexive than previously acknowledged.**<sup>52</sup> Sant Cassia has demonstrated that prior to industrialisation on the island in the nineteenth century that neither differences over ethnicity or religion resulted in major outbreaks of violent conflict between the two dominant groups of Greek and Turk.<sup>53</sup> Instead, it was only following the widespread development of literacy and education, paired with increased social mobility, that intraethnic conflict emerged. This occurred in tandem with the emergence of cultural nationalism across

Europe. It is unfortunate the heritage continues to be propagated as a tool in these ongoing narratives of division. The anthropologist Rebecca Bryant has argued, for example, that the both Greek and Turkish Cypriot divergent memories have continued to harden over a ‘past in pieces’.<sup>54</sup> It is hoped that more informed engagement with the Cyprus’s built cultural heritage can provide important insights into the island’s history. And that these sites and monuments can form the basis of a more inclusive and non-confrontational discussions on building a more peaceful future.

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## FIGURE List and CAPTIONS

FIG. 1 Topographic map of Cyprus showing the main historic towns (author).

FIG.2 Detail of Pinargenti's 1573 illustration of the siege of Nicosia.

FIG.3 Map of the fortifications of Nicosia in **Ottoman times**, with the contemporary street pattern shown internally. 1 is the Selimye Mosque, 2 is the Great Han and 3 is the location of the Hayder Pasha Mosque (author).

FIG. 4 Plan of Famagusta, after a 1914 map produced by Wagner&Debes, Leipzig, Germany.

FIG. 5 **The castle of Kyrenia, showing the author's inferred generalised phases of its architectural development. This phasing was developed during an interpretative survey undertaken in 2017. The Venetian phase in particular is complex, and a number of important architectural developments took place throughout this phase (author).**

FIG. 6 Detail of Larnaca Bay, probably drawn by Antonio Borg around 1760 showing the fort immediately west of the town and a number of coastal towers further along the coast. (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

FIG. 7 Plans of four cathedral and church sites that were converted to mosques during the early Ottoman period. A is the former cathedral at Famagusta, B is the Selimye Mosque in Nicosia, formerly the Cathedral of Santa Sophia, C is the Sinan Pasa Mosque originally called St. Peter and St. Paul Church in Famagusta and D is the Hayder Pasha Mosque, formerly the 14<sup>th</sup>-century St Catherine's Church. **Each of the plans was redrawn by the author from Jeffery's published 1918 plans, and updated during survey work in 2016 and 2017. The gray sections represent Ottoman structural additions to the buildings.**

FIG. 8 Detail from the first full triangulated survey of the island of Cyprus, carried out in 1878-1882 by H.H. Kitchener of Nicosia showing lines of wells and the aqueducts supplying the city (Reproduced with the permission of the National library of Scotland).

FIG. 9 West facing elevations of two Ottoman-period fountains in Famagusta, A is Djafer Pasha (1597) and B is the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Kuru Cesme, or Dry Fountain, built into the city walls in Famagusta. **The shading differences represent different stone types, with particular features such as moulding also highlighted (author).**

FIG. 10 A digital reconstruction of the Büyük Han in Nicosia (not to scale). **The shading differences represent particular features such as moulding, window surrounds, corner wall buttresses and decorative roof pieces (author).**

FIG. 11 Photograph of a section of the UN Green line and historic city walls near the Paphos Gate.



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<sup>1</sup> Edbury 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Arbel 2000; Arbel 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Jennings 1993.

<sup>4</sup> Arbel 2009, 37.

<sup>5</sup> Jennings 1993.

<sup>6</sup> Soucek 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Norwich 1981.

<sup>8</sup> Walsh 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Rhodes, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Brummett 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Perbellini 1988.

<sup>12</sup> Lowry 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Barkey 2008.

<sup>14</sup> See Peacock 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Theocharides and Stavrides 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Arbel 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Elite infantry units and highly trained soldiers who were loyal to the Sultan and acted as his bodyguard and household troops.

<sup>18</sup> Ozguven 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Schriwer 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Theocharides and Stavrides 2012, 235.

<sup>21</sup> Given 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Morvaridi 1993.

<sup>23</sup> Anastasiou and Mitchell 2013, 218; Megaw 1972, 233.

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<sup>24</sup> Constantini 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Given 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Yildiz 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Sahillioğlu 1969, 7-8.

<sup>29</sup> Yildiz 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Vatin 2011

<sup>31</sup> Gazioğlu 1990.

<sup>32</sup> Cobham 1769, 25.

<sup>33</sup> Morvaridi 1993.

<sup>34</sup> Jennings 1993.

<sup>35</sup> Yildiz 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Nelson 2004.

<sup>37</sup> Watenpaugh 2004.

<sup>38</sup> Maglio 2011, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Bierman 1991, 53.

<sup>40</sup> Brumfield 2000, 37.

<sup>41</sup> Smilden 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Hadjianastasis 2014, 139.

<sup>43</sup> Gazioğlu 1990.

<sup>44</sup> Lowry 2003 3

<sup>45</sup> Inalcik 1954, 103.

<sup>46</sup> Djar 2009, 161.

<sup>47</sup> Wattenpaugh 2004, 6.

<sup>48</sup> Ergin 2008, 204.

<sup>49</sup> Wattenpaugh 2004, 7.

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<sup>50</sup> Michael, Kappler and Gavriel 2009; Byrant and Papadakis 2012.

<sup>51</sup> Aymes 2014.

<sup>52</sup> Hadjikyriacou 2016; 2014.

<sup>53</sup> Sant Cassia 1986, 3.

<sup>54</sup> Byrant 2010.